

# LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

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1995

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# VIOLENCE

## A grieving sister

I wrote this letter immediately after reading the letter to the editor from the abused wife in your February issue, but hesitated mailing it until now.

Her letter struck close to home. She says that she never felt any support from members of her congregation. We need to know how to give that support.

My sister was an abused wife. I never saw [her husband] abuse her, because he was all charm when anyone else was present. But I saw the bruises, and I saw her shiver when he happened to come into the room while I was there.

I brought her to the doctor's office when she needed treatment for her injuries. I held her hand when she became hysterical from her deep, inner pain.

She left him several times, and in those times I drove many miles back and forth to check on her, bring supplies, and give moral support. When she was afraid to go back to the house for extra clothing, I did the errand for her, choosing a time when he was not at home, breathing a sigh of relief that he did not come while I was there.

Other family members and I offered her refuge until decisions could be made, but she refused us all, and she always went back to him.

Now she is dead.

She haunts my dreams. I dream that I open my eyes and see her standing beside my bed, but when I try to talk to her, she is gone.

To the lady who says she never feels any support, I would like to say, "Please, please tell us what kind of

support to give." I thought I was doing the best I could for my sister, but it was not enough.

*A grieving sister*

*(Name withheld on request)*

*[Look for other moving stories in the LWT Reader Call titled "My Story of Violence and Healing" in the March 1996 LWT. See the box on page 10 of this issue for more information.]*

## Some hot topics, please

Having just completed the study on the Fifth Commandment, I wondered if a study could be done on some of the hot topics in the US.

Some of them are abortion, assisted suicide, and capital punishment. [Also:] Is the gay movement correct? How do we accept gays? God's children? How else?) Why is everyone so angry? Is spanking child abuse? Women's ordination and St. Paul. Gun control—how much? How little? Men should be head of the household—how does that go? Communion every Sunday? Why? Why not?

*Madge Dacko*

*Mt. Clemens, Michigan*

## A "deplorable situation"

I would like to thank you for printing the thought-provoking piece by the Occhetti-Klohrs in the March LWT ["By Whose Authority?"]. The issue of the United States-supplied military violence against the people of Latin America—all too often beginning with military training at the United States Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Georgia—is very important. Many graduates of the SOA have an abominable record of atrocities.



ing: massacres of civilians, *d'état*, political assassinations, re of prisoners, and "disappear-" of poor people.

A majority of the El Salvadoran ities investigated by the UN Commission were carried out OA graduates, including the sination of Archbishop Romero a group of Jesuit priests and ous workers.

This deplorable situation will change when the 250+ U.S. representatives, who annually vote to nue funding the SOA, are coned by concerned voters who want U.S. tax dollars spent ing Latin American soldiers to re and kill.

Gary Kohls

Lutheran Peace Fellowship  
Piquet Lakes, Minnesota



## About Kate...

We are delighted to welcome into the LWT family Kate Sprutta Elliott, who joins the magazine as associate editor. Kate comes with a number of years' experience in magazine editing and writing. She loves to read, do theology, take an active role in her parish life, and enjoy her two cats. What more could we ask for in a new editor?

## About the cover...

This month's outside front cover is "interactive." That is, we at LWT want you to enter into the picture. What do you see in the image there that might speak to the issue of violence in God's world? Reflect on the cover, use it as a basis for a meditation of your own, then share your thoughts with us in 100 words or less. Send your response, postmarked by November 10, to "Cover Meditation," Lutheran Woman Today, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189. The March issue will feature the results. If yours is used, LWT will compensate you in an appropriate fashion.

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### Women of the ELCA

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*Lori Rosenkvist*

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*Charlotte Fiechter*

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*Sonia C. Solomonson*

## Bulletin board

How to write, call, order, and compute.

### In the March 1996 issue:

Several articles prepared for  
this issue will appear in the  
March 1996 LWT. Look for  
pieces on:

\* Media and Violence

\* Body Image Violence

\* "My Story of Violence  
and Healing" —a Reader Call.

ht...

atch for the third article in a series on Lutheran  
Ministry Organizations in the next issue.

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benefit of Women of the ELCA participants, articles relating to  
n of the ELCA mission areas are marked, at their conclusion, with these  
ls: **A**=action, **C**=community and **G**=growth.

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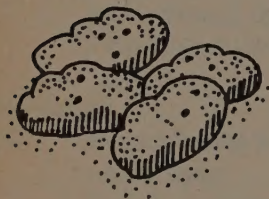
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# Ingredients for Thanks-giving

Marj Leegard

## Day One



**Scripture:** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in the land as dark as death a light has dawned. Their eyes have increased their joy and given them gladness; they rejoice in your presence as warriors who rejoice at harvest, as warriors exult in dividing spoil (Isaiah 9:2-3, Revised English Bible).

**Hymn:** Read or sing "Oh, Praise the Lord, My Soul!" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 538).

### ***Mashed Potatoes***

Those who garden understand "warriors exulting in dividing the spoil." That feeling when pulling a huge rot or unearthing a hill of 15 lovely potatoes is like covering unearned dividends. We have expectations when we plant and till and water, but still the harvest surprises us. When we bring the vegetables into the kitchen and carefully clean the good garden loam from them, we understand "rejoicing at the harvest." A bowl of mashed potatoes crowned, just for Thanksgiving, with a swirl of melting butter, is easily recognized as God's gift from God's earth and sunshine. But what about the anonymous white flakes poured from a colorful bag into a pan of boiling water? These, too, become mashed potatoes.

It takes more time and greater understanding to remember that boxes and flakes are God's gifts. Where once there was only the family between man and potato and garden, there are now, often, more sophisticated intricate processes. We can't all dig our own potatoes.

day is gone when most of us had a cow and knew the  
e and the wonder of cream and butter.

Thanksgiving is a time to remember the source of the har-  
We give thanks for those who work and risk to produce  
ood we eat. We are thankful for those who manufacture  
ransport and who stock the store shelves. We remember  
who will have no harvest to give them great gladness.  
gives us the opportunity to be part of the process between  
est and rejoicing.

The hymn sings of the hungry supplied with bread. Of  
gers, widows, and orphans made secure. God blesses us  
such abundance that we overflow and bless each other.  
*Praise the Lord, oh my soul. We give thanks for all creation.  
our hearts with your love and guide us to thankfulness  
generosity. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Figure:** The poor and the needy look for water  
find none; their tongues are parched with  
t. But I the Lord shall provide for their wants;  
God of Israel, shall not forsake them. I shall  
rivers on the arid heights, and wells in the  
ys; I shall turn the desert into pools and dry  
into springs of water (Isaiah 41:17-18, REB).  
**n:** Read or sing "How Marvelous God's  
ness" (LBW 515).

## Day Two



### Cranberries

erating the bounty of the earth at harvest is never pic-  
as a little dab of undercooked meat sharing a plate with  
baby vegetables. Nouvelle cuisine may be fine for other  
ions, but for thankfulness we think of plenty and over-  
ng variety.

We did not come up with this notion ourselves. Isaiah pic-  
bounty in the dry desert not as a cool drink but as rivers  
ng down from the arid heights. Rivers rising from nothing  
eat thundering waterfalls. Even that is not bounty  
gh. If the rushing river is too much, we are invited to the  
in the valley. If our strength is not equal to the well, there  
ools. And when we tire of the warm placid pools, we can  
the icy, cold springs.

God who gives with such an open hand calls us to give in  
ame way. It reminds me of a day 50-some years ago. We  
shopping in the grocery store during World War II when  
ne put a brown paper bag into our grocery box.

"Cranberries," he said. I was horrified. I had no sugar and  
so. Our bachelor neighbor was standing at the counter.

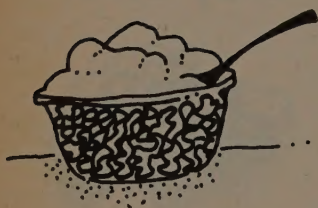


"I'll give you my sugar allotment if you invite me over for dinner," he said. I told him that he was more than welcome and that he didn't have to give me his sugar. He insisted that he had no use for sugar, and the deal was struck.

When I got home I discovered the brown paper did not contain cranberries. It was full of peanuts! I had been "had" by my fun-loving husband. When my guest arrived I said, "I have a confession. There are no cranberries." He laughed and saw him bag up the peanuts. I just wanted to come for dinner.

*Generous God, you give us more than we earn. More than we deserve. And often, more than we need. Help us to share your bounty is meant for all. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Day Three



**Scripture:** But scripture says, "I believed therefore I spoke out," and we too, in the spirit of faith, believe and therefore speak out. We know that he who raised the Lord Jesus Christ will with Jesus raise us too, and bring us into his presence, and you with us. Indeed, all this is for your sake, so that, as the abounding grace of God is shared by more and more, the greater may be the chorus of thanksgiving that rises to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:13-17, REB).

**Hymn:** Read or sing "Before Jehovah's Awesome Throne" (LBW 531).

### Stuffing

How well we understand abounding grace shared! We know that the great chorus of thanksgiving follows. We are planning a holiday feast. A feast traditionally shared. We want our children and grandchildren, our parents, our brothers and sisters and all their families, and our friends to sit around the table with us. We are going to serve the stuffing that is our tradition; Grandmother's flat bread, so thin we say we can read newspaper through it; those special sweet pickles that Grandfather heaps on his plate; buttered rutabagas, though we have forgotten why; and fruit salad with real whipped cream. Every food is someone's favorite. We talk about the raisin pie that Grandfather liked and conjure up happy memories with each other.

Logistics and algebraic equations and in-laws and the passing of time determine how many people sit at our table. Even if we use the piano bench and the end table and the most colorful display of mismatched china, we cannot contain the whole of all the people we love at our feast. Why does one want to do all the shredding and stirring and rolling and basting required? Because we like to share and to hear



compliments, "This is the best!"  
 We have another feast to share. We know who "raised the  
 to life" and we want others to know. We share the knowl-  
 that Jesus lives; and the news that we, too, shall live  
 forth the "chorus of thanksgiving" that God hears today.  
*h God of Justice, join our voices to all "the thousand  
 es" that fill your courts with praise. Thank you for all who  
 out in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**ture:** Let all the earth acclaim the Lord!  
 up the Lord in gladness; enter his presence  
 joyful songs. Acknowledge that the Lord is  
 he made us and we are his, his own people,  
 rock which he shepherds. Enter his gates  
 thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give  
 s to him and bless his name; for the Lord  
 d and his love is everlasting, his faithful-  
 ndures to all generations (Psalm 100, REB).  
**n:** Read or sing "Now Thank We All Our  
 LBW 534).

## Day Four



### Pizza

family gathered ever since the family began. Gradually  
 els grew up, married, and brought home families for the  
 onal gathering. Soon grandchildren were married and  
 evitable happened: It was no longer possible for everyone  
 e for the day. A new time was chosen.

grandmother wanted everything to be the best for this  
 in tradition. Promptly she came down with a cold and  
 misery that goes with it. The best she could offer for the  
 was pizza. She felt miserable until her daughter called  
 ter in the week. "I asked Vickie what we should have for  
 rst holiday dinner in our own house and do you know  
 she wanted?" Grandmother could not imagine what her  
 granddaughter wanted. "Vickie said, 'Pizza, of course!  
 ke Grandma had.'"

We glance nervously back over our shoulders to see what  
 who lived before us established. We forget that our for-  
 were once the new generation. It is difficult to think of  
 ves as the generation blessed by God's faithfulness in  
 almist's song of thanksgiving.

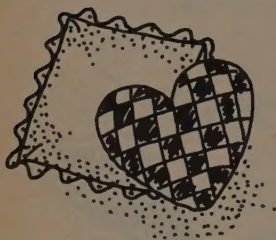
ongregations, like families, find it easy to give thanks for  
 d and the past. Must this generation wait until it is his-  
 before we recognize that God's "faithfulness endures to all  
 ations?"

ne hymn writer reminds us to be thankful for all that

God has done and then ends the verse with the ringing statement of faith: "And still is ours today."

*Dear God of all ages, we thank you for this day built on the foundation of yesterday and the hope for tomorrow. Let us begin our thankfulness in the present; for you are here in Christ's name. Amen.*

## Day Five



**Scripture:** I wish you joy in the Lord always. Again I say: all joy be yours. Be known to everyone for your consideration of others. The Lord is near; do not be anxious, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7, REB).

**Hymn:** Sing or read "For the Fruit of Creation" (LBW 563).

### Home

The roads were icy, the journey long, and vacation days precious. They took the pickup and strapped the car seat between them. Halfway there, they hit a patch of ice and the truck went into a terrifying slide. Laurie screamed and put her arms around her tiny daughter. Joe regained control and they were on their way again but not before little Megan said, "Don't be afraid, Mommy, we're on our way to Poppa's house. That's the important part. We're on our way home."

Most of us have endured enough to know that bad things can happen, and our terrors are grounded in tear-drenched fact. Yet, we do not live in constant anticipation of the bad in horror-filled memories. What is it that takes away the fear and fills our hearts with gratitude for the good?

The peace of God comes with the knowledge that the good is near.

Giving thanks in every petition, in every prayer, in every request keeps our hearts and thoughts in Christ. God wants us to have that peace which God has promised. Thankfulness will guard our hearts from anxiety.

We know we are on our way home. It is the way home that is sometimes frightening. But we need to remember that God is near.

*Thanks be to God, in the name of our risen Savior, for the care. While I sleep, the earth teems with growth, "ful-*



*in earth's safe keeping." Take away my frantic desire to understand the often incomprehensible journey home to you. My heart with thankfulness. Amen.*

**Figure:** Then they removed the stone. Jesus rose upwards and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me" (John 11:41, REB).

**n:** Sing or read "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (LBW 370).

### ***Friends***

Had friends who were a glorious blend of Italian, African American, and Norwegian. We loved them because they taught us the meaning of a friend. There was no good reason why we could not have loved each other. We were old. They were young. Our one child at home was nearly grown. They were even active little kids. We were past the years of worry about bills. They were in the middle of economic chaos. We named ourselves to be mentors and benefactors, but we learned from them and were richly blessed.

Once when I invited them to dinner, the mother said, "No one invites a family this big to dinner!" In the hustle of chopping and slicing, our son-in-law said, "You are going to a lot of trouble for this party." I said, "You wait. You will see which way the cake tips."

When evening came, they trooped in from the cold in a parade of children and gifts. One had a basket of eggs they had gathered. One had wild rice. One had a plump dressed ready for the soup kettle. One had a little dress for our granddaughter sewn from brilliant cotton remnants that day.

With all the generosity, the greatest gift of these friends—all friends—is being. Hearing. Sharing. Presence. We longed for someone who loves us. Jesus came to his friend Mary after her brother's death and is thankful for a listener. "Father, I thank you for hearing me."

The great and wonderful gift of God is presence. Our God listens. Gratitude calls forth generosity. And so we give our gifts of loving, listening presence. The tie that binds our hearts together is like the tie that binds us to God's listening presence.

*Thank you, God, for hearing me. Thank you for friends who love me by listening. For Jesus' sake, bless the tie that binds me to you and the tie that binds friends to each other. Amen.*

## **Day Six**



# Day Seven



**Scripture:** Let me begin by thanking my through Jesus Christ, for you all, because story of your faith is being told all over world (Romans 1:8, REB).

**Hymn:** Read or sing "Let All Things Living" (LBW 557).

## Stories

"Put down the flour sifter! Tell your he stop shelling walnuts for a few min Everything comes to a halt when a sto going around. We are not immediately

ested in who is telling the story. Not even in who told he story first. We want to know who did what when.

The story of your faith is going around. Don't go ba the cookie recipe. Know that you've been busy telling your faith. Are you surprised you have been? Don't be.

Is a quilt you helped to make sheltering a family from heat of the sun or the cold night? Did you enjoy your vi the nursing home so much that you have forgotten how joy you brought to others there? Were your dollars add others to help a new congregation just being born?

Is a baby snuggled in a layette you made? I know were a good neighbor yesterday because I am the nei you loved. Were you among those praying for your pa Your Sunday school teachers? Are your grandchildren si "Jesus Loves Me" because you taught it to your children

Did you stand beside others last Sunday and conf believe..."? Do you think it is only those strong-voiced a the spotlight who tell the faith story? The text says, "Tha my God...for you all."

If every story began in thankfulness, what wonderfu ries would follow! God chooses myriad voices and a thou trillion hands and hearts in every generation. We are the chosen in our baptism, to spread the news now. Is it any der that "all things now living" are singing thankfulness

*Thank you, God, for faith-filled storytellers. We heard because they spoke. We have learned love be they gave. Thank you for choosing us to speak and in the name of Jesus. Amen. GC*



*Writer and speaker Marj Leegard is a semi-retired farmer from Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.*



# The Hidden Promise

James A. Nestingen

## Session 11 Good Neighbors

**Study Text:** Exodus 20:17

**Story Text:** 1 Corinthians 1:1-16



### The Tenth Commandment

**You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is your neighbor's.**

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we do not tempt or coax away from our neighbor his wife or his workers, but encourage them to remain loyal.

### Memory Text

I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness (Romans 7:7-8).

### Overview

A house becomes a home when there are people in and around it. So while the Ninth Commandment extends God's defense of our property, the Tenth is devoted to further protection of our relationships. There is hardly anything so treacherous as a person who breaks up families or undermines friendships. On the other hand, there is hardly anything as nice in this life as people who are dependable. God wants to put our daily relationships beyond question.

### Opening

O you who fill the heart with every good and gracious gift, make us true and faithful neighbors who can live together in loyalty, honoring one another's relationships so that we are not disruptive, but help to cement the bonds that hold people together, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## The Story

The church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, according to the words of the Nicene Creed (*LBW*, page 64), but just the same congregations can be contentious—even when they are served by likes of the apostle Paul himself. In fact, Paul just about matches the Corinthians in the people of Corinth. They were divided every way. Much of the trouble developed from coveting that had turned out to be very personal. The Tenth Commandment has something to say to this situation.

Paul was going to have some considerable words with the Corinthians about their sins, but still, in the opening words of his first letter, he addressed them as “sanctified” and called them “saints.”

Sometimes the word *sanctified* gets confused with another one that sounds like it: *sanctimonious*. When that happens, it appears that sanctification is a moral quality, as though the sanctified were ethical overachievers. Actually, the word is much more down-to-earth than that. A person who is holy, sanctified by Christ, is one set apart by God for a true or proper relationship with Christ.

Christ loves sinners. So Paul addressed the Corinthians as saints even when he knew—better than anyone else, it seems—just how troublesome their sins had become. Having identified the people to whom he was writing, Paul then bestowed the blessing of God upon them.

**1.** Who had made the Corinthians saints, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:2?

With this beautiful introduction completed, Paul wanted to give thanks, bearing witness to the power of the gospel as it had gone to work and borne fruit among the people. So he spoke specifically of the gifts of grace they had been given.

**2.** What is the reason for Paul's thanks (verse 4)?

The blessing in verses 4-9 speaks about some of the characteristics or gifts of the Corinthians' sainthood. What are they?



Paul knew, even as he was writing these words, that the people of the congregation had complained about his looks; that they criticized him for being bolder in his letters than he was in person; that they had, in general, given him a hard time. Still he spoke of Christ's unrelenting commitment to them and of how Christ would find them blameless on the last day. Given their track record, this could only be true because of the faithfulness of God in Christ.

With the gospel fresh in mind, Paul next turned his attention to one of the main problems that had developed in Corinth. In spite of the unity that had been granted in Christ, divisions had developed.

What was the result of the division (verse 11)?

What was the cause of the division (verse 12)?

Divisions like this often happen in congregations. People start picking up loyalties over former and present pastors as they imagine how those pastors represent, or don't represent, their own ideas. Instead of working together, people choose up sides, as the Corinthians did—each side arguing the merits of Cephas, Apollos, or whomever is being argued. Each side tries to coax others to their point of view. Then loyalty is broken, and factions are born. After Paul put the problem out in the open, it didn't take him long to start breaking down the divisions. He went right back to the true source of unity. Paul often referred to the church as the body of Christ. So the question he raised in verse 13, "Has Christ divided?" dealt with both the person of Christ and with his body, the communion of saints.

Distinguish between the unity of the communion of saints or the body of Christ, and the unity in congregations.

How do they overlap?

In which arena is unity more fragile?

Baptism is one of the ways Jesus made the communion of saints a tangible thing. It is God's sacrament of welcome and adoption, the sign of our Christian identity, and a primary act of boundless grace. It is the way we acknowledge our entrance into the communion of saints; and the power of Baptism, like the power behind our sainthood, is Christ.

**5.** How did the divided loyalties of the Corinthians challenge this understanding of Baptism?

What was wrong with rallying behind one baptizer or another?

### **The Command**

On the surface it might appear that if there is any commandment that seems like a candidate for irrelevance, it is the Tenth. Unlike the Sixth Commandment, which also deals with relationships, or the Ninth, with its prohibition of coveting, the Tenth appears irrelevant. Worse, when the Ninth and Tenth Commandments are taken together, a wife is listed after the house and before the servants and the cattle, as though women were property—surely an outdated notion! Similarly, while ranchers and farmers have stock, few city folks or rural people commonly have servants any longer.

But as the memory text indicates, there is a lot more to the Tenth Commandment than meets the eye. It deals with some of the most divisive and difficult problems in human relationships. Because relationships can involve so much pain, God increases his protection by offering us the Tenth Commandment.

In relationships, coveting begins quietly enough, with a



notice, a fleeting thought: "He's a nice person," or, "She really likes her stuff." Soon enough, the notice becomes attraction: "It would be fun to get to know that person better," or, "We should ask them over sometime and get better acquainted."

So far, everything is all right. The good Lord wants us to have fun, to delight in one another's qualities, and enjoy each other. Trouble generally begins when we first start to encounter some resistance. The person of interest may, for example, be someone whose spouse, may have other commitments that take priority, or she may not share interest in developing a friendship. There are many number of legitimate reasons why the interest in a relationship may not be reciprocal.

But it needs to be said that the human heart can be strange. Sometimes, other grass always appears greener. There is no love sadder than love denied, or, as Paul said, "I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'" (Romans 7:7-8). This is where the trouble really starts, going deep—deeper than simply "unrequited love." Desire becomes obsession and love turns to jealousy or envy. When forces like this come together, they turn toward craftiness, which has the power to ruin any of our relationships.

There are all kinds of ways to coax or entice, wheedle, cajole, manipulate people in relationships. The simplest are as transparent as a child's offer: "If you'll be my friend, I'll give you this or that." Adults are more subtle about their "deals." Whether it is because we are unsure of ourselves or desperate for the relationship, we start to rely on tricks and traps to draw people into our web.

The trouble is that when we're pushing ourselves into other relationships, we're generally excluding someone else with whom we had a prior commitment: a spouse, another friend, a family member. However it happens, gain and pain are wrapped in the same package and can eventually end up being given to everybody involved.

Identify some common ways in which we "coax" friendship.

do they "entice" it?

## How are they manipulative?

Have you seen this happen in congregations? How?

In the Sixth Commandment, God protects our relationships putting us on notice not to break them ourselves; in the Tenth, God also puts out word to the neighbors, warning them—and us, as we are also neighbors to others—not to interfere in the relationships of others. They are protected. But there is even more promise to God's protection hidden in the Tenth Commandment. God wants our relationships to be free, open and carried out in mutual confidence. Marriage is a special case. It begins in friendship and develops into much more. Mutual commitment—the promise of a lifetime—makes this possible. Without such a promise, two people could hardly take on all the risks and responsibilities of life together so closely.

Friendship works differently. It can only be given and received deeply when it's free. A friend who manipulates, dominates, controls, uses or exploits had better be prepared to look for no friends—a whole series of them. A friend who gives, entrusts, confides, shares, helps, and blesses is one of the most precious treasures of life.

That's how God, in the promise of the Tenth Commandment, wants all friendships to be. So God says: "Don't covet. I'll make you have some friends—you just leave that to me. Open your hands (or heart) and take a risk; everything will be just fine."

### **7.** How does manipulating or controlling a friendship undermine it?

What is the risk of being open-handed in a friendship?  
What is the possible gain?

## What does this mean?

When the Holy Spirit goes to work on us, one of the first things the Spirit does is to gather us together with other believers. So, as Luther explains in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps.

This is a unity born in the forgiveness of sins. So, as Paul wrote his Corinthians, it holds in spite of differences and conflicts. It is a unity as close as the body itself, a unity that comes from Christ through the Spirit, and brings us into Christ, the best friend a sinner could ever have. So Jesus says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20).

From this perspective, we can see two things. One of them is how disruptive disunity is, whether in the church or beyond it. When relationships begin to break down, when people begin to divide off against one another, the only real winner is death. For when people are alone, they only have their own passing strength to rely on. It doesn't take long for that to wither and die.

● Is there anything that would make a division in a relationship legitimate—in the church or beyond? Explain your answer.

Disunity can be so destructive. But we also have been given a gift in the unity of the church, the communion of saints.

Other relationships have their own gifts to offer. The only relationship that God limits is marriage. There is no limit on the number of friends you can have. Though only a few might be really close friends, the more the merrier!

Friendships thrive in communities; they open up all kinds of possibilities for help, cooperation, and enjoyment.

Yet there is no unity in this life deeper than that given in common faith shared by a community of faith. This is the real tragedy of the Corinthians, who divided up over their loyalties to different pastors, just as it is the tragedy of any church that divides. But common faith—Jesus—is the real joy of the church. As you watch all of the sinners lining up to receive Jesus' body and blood, you can see Christ gathering up his friends so that he can do just what friends do: give himself freely. Then there is unity—even a celebration, no matter what else is happening.



## 9. How does Christ provide for the unity of the church—what are the signs that sustain it?

What gifts do we have to offer that can promote unity?

### Looking Ahead

There are no more commandments to consider, but there is a parting word—a tough one. It goes under the title, “What does God say of all these commandments?” And it is a mouthful.

### About the Author

*The Rev. James A. Nestingen is a popular speaker and author of several books on Lutheran theology. A gifted storyteller of the faith, Nestingen is a professor of church history at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.*

*“The Hidden Promise: A Study of the Ten Commandments” was prepared by Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America under the direction of the Rev. Karen Battle, director for educational resources. Catherine Malotky and Betty Christiansen, editors. Copyright © 1995 Augsburg Fortress, Publishers. May not be reproduced without permission.*

On the next page find a program for individual or group use that introduces the 1996 Women of the ELCA Bible study carried in Lutheran Woman Today—“Jesus: The Messiah Among Us.” Find an overview of 1996 Bible study titles, texts, and companion pieces on pages 23-24.



# Getting to Know Jesus: The Messiah Among Us

Lori Rosenkvist

**T**hroughout the year, our worship life reflects changes in the liturgical seasons. In 1996, the Bible study "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us" uses the seasons of the church year to help answer the questions, "Who is Jesus?" and "How is Jesus revealed to us?"

For example, in January the Bible study session and the church year celebrate the baptism of Jesus. Easter falls in April, so the fourth session looks at "The Risen Christ." During some of the months of Pentecost, the sessions look at Jesus as "The Advocate and Intercessor," "The Healer," "The Servant," "The Friend of Sinners," "The Teacher," and "The Rebel."

To get a taste of the coming study we'll look at the church seasons—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost—and relate the seasons to the 12 Bible study sessions.

What special meaning or significance does each season hold for you?

Think of a favorite hymn for each season.

**Who is this Jesus?** What did it mean—in his day—that Jesus was the Messiah? What does it mean for us today?

Writer Carolyn Keller explores these and other questions in a 12-session Bible study—"Jesus: The Messiah Among Us." This Women of the ELCA Bible study will be carried in the 1996 issues of *Lutheran Woman Today*.

These pages serve as an introduction to the study. Directions for Bible study groups that wish to use this as a theme program are found on pages 21-22.

To work through this interactive introduction, you will need a Bible, a copy of *Lutheran Book of Worship*, paper to draw on, crayons/markers, and a pencil/pen.

## Advent/Christmas

The first two seasons of the church year—Advent and Christmas—will be explored together in session 12 of “Jesus: The Messiah Among Us.” This session, “The Baby in Bethlehem,” will be found in the December 1996 issue of LWT.

In Advent we think about Jesus as Lord of all and look forward to his coming again at the end of all ages as glorious king. At Christmas we celebrate God’s gift to us in Jesus, the baby. Both seasons focus on the closeness and presence of Christ among us.

**Read:** Luke 2:1-20 (the study text for Session 12).

**Sing or say:** “What Child Is This” (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 40).

- Draw a picture or a symbol that represents Advent or Christmas. Write a prayer based on the drawing.

## Epiphany

Epiphany is the season of light, when we clearly see God made manifest in Jesus, the beloved Son. In this season—and in session one of the study—we examine Jesus’ baptism, as well as our own.

**Read:** Mark 1:4-11 (Session 1 study text).

**Sing or say:** “Songs of Thankfulness and Praise” (*LBW* 90).

- Draw a picture or symbol and write a prayer that represents Epiphany.

Depending on your age at your baptism, you might not remember

much about God’s saving even. Whoever you are, whatever your age, almighty God has spoken to you by name with the promise, “Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever” (*LBW* p. 124).

- Repeat the promise (“Child of God....”) while making the sign of the cross on your forehead. [Group turn to your neighbor and proclaim this good news to her, tracing the sign of the cross on her forehead.]

## Lent

In Lent we see Jesus, the crucified Messiah. On the cross, Jesus became one with humanity. As a result of the cross, no person and no human experience is separated from God. When we confess our sins, the power of a crucified and risen Messiah becomes the power of new life, of mercy and love. Life is never again the same.

**Read:** Mark 14:61-65; 15:1-4. These are the study texts for the third session (carried in the March issue of LWT).

**Say:** The confession found on the right-hand side of page 155 in *LBW*. [Groups: divide into two parts and read the confession responsively.]

- Draw a picture or symbol and write a prayer that represents Lent.

## Easter

In Easter, new life stands beside the old—life emerges from death. The risen Christ is a forerunner of our

(continued on p. 2)



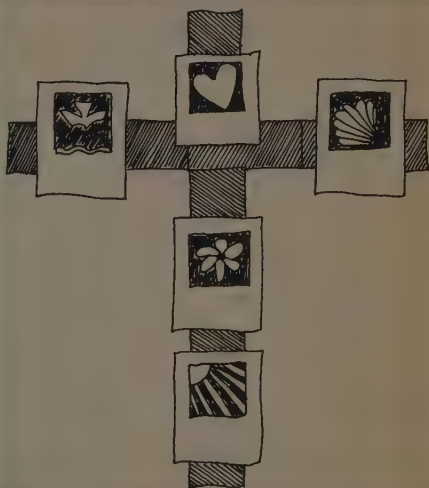


# For group leaders

**H**ere's how to use these pages as a Bible study theme program and introduce the 1996 Bible study to your circle, women's group, or congregation.

**Leadership:** The following tasks could be shared among a program committee: program leader (someone quite familiar with church seasons), publicity, activity coordinator, accompanist, setup, takedown.

**Preparations:** Mount sheets of brown or black construction paper (8½" x 11" folded in half) on a wall in your meeting area to make a cross shape. Use three overlapping lengths of paper to make the vertical beam and three to make the horizontal. The cross will form the basis of a Bible study mural (see diagram at right).



Arrange the meeting area using five tables. Designate a table for each of these seasons:

*Advent / Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.* You may want to decorate each table according to the season. If you expect a big crowd, you may need to create two or more murals, or have two table groups work together.

On each table:

- Place the study text of the session that corresponds to the season. See "Bible Study Session Overview" (pp.23-24). These sessions are highlighted in bold in this program.

- A Bible, or Bibles.
- Copies of *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
- The Bible Study Leader Guide or Resource Book (see "Companion Pieces Available," p.24).

(continued on next page)

- White pieces of 8½" x 11" paper, assorted colors of construction paper, several scissors, colored markers, pencils, glue.

### ***Beginning the program***

Welcome the group to this introduction of the 1996 Bible study. The leader can use the first paragraphs of the article (p. 19) as an introduction, or craft her own.

It would be helpful to play the 15-minute introductory videotape to set the stage. (See "Companion Pieces Available," p.24.)

Go to a chalkboard or newsprint, and write "The Church Year" and the numbers 1 to 6 below it. Invite participants to name the seasons of the church year. Record the seasons in the order noted in the next paragraph to establish the rhythm of the church year. Continue by asking participants to describe what happens in various seasons.

*Advent*: waiting for Jesus' second coming, preparing for Jesus' birth. *Christmas*: Jesus is born, Immanuel. *Epiphany*: light of the world, Jesus is baptized. *Lent*: suffering servant, Jesus' death. *Easter*: risen Lord, new life. *Pentecost*: Holy Spirit—the advocate, Jesus—teacher, healer, good shepherd, friend.

Say to the group, "Today we will learn about the seasons of the church as we work together on a project."

Instruct the participants to work within their table groups to create a symbol that represents one of these seasons, using the information on the card at the center of each table. They should read the Scripture passage, talk about how this passage helps to answer the question, "Who is Jesus," and create a seasonal symbol, mounting the symbol on the white square of paper.

You could expand the program by asking each group to select a hymn that explains the significance of their season or write a prayer based on the symbol and Bible text.

When the groups are finished, call them to order by saying, "Now let's bring our symbols together to form a mural and celebrate the presence of Jesus, the Messiah, among us."

Invite a representative from the Advent/Christmas table to present the group's symbol and explain its significance. Tape the symbol in place along either beam of the cross. This would be the time to share the group's prayer or chosen hymn, if assigned. (Symbols could also be kept and used by participants in ways of their own choosing during the 1996 Bible study.)

The leader should then read the paragraphs for Advent/Christmas and direct the group in the activities (reading the study text, singing the hymn).

Follow this pattern for the other seasons, ending with the hymn "Crown Him with Many Crowns" (LBW 170).

*continued from p. 20)*

own resurrection life. Jesus Christ models for us our hope of salvation.

**Lead:** John 20:1-18. This is the study text for April's session titled "The Risen Christ."

The Service for Burial of the Dead helps us to understand this connection between death and life.

Turn to page 206 in *LBW* and read the words following Rubric 4 ("When we were baptized...").

In our grief, and as we face the process of dying ourselves, we can hear these words afresh, calling us now to see death as a passage and not an end. Let's celebrate Christ's Easter presence among us.

**Sing or say:** "Hallelujah! Jesus lives!" (*LBW* 147)

Draw a picture or symbol and write a prayer that represents Easter.

## Pentecost

After his ascension, Jesus promised his disciples he would not leave them without help. He promised the Holy Spirit to guide and support. Throughout the weeks and

months of the Pentecost season we meet Jesus in many other forms: good shepherd, healer, servant, friend of sinners, teacher, and rebel.

We are never alone as we pray. Always, we are part of a global undercurrent of prayer. And even this is only part of the truth. Always, Christ prays for us—not as one who stands outside our suffering, but as one who endured death on a cross for us, as one who rose again to give us new life.

**Lead:** Hebrews 7:23-28 and

Romans 8:31-39, the study text for session five, "The Advocate and The Intercessor."

- Turn to page 23 in *Lutheran Book of Worship* and pray the first prayer for the Day of Pentecost ("God, the Father...").

- Draw a picture or symbol and write a prayer that represents Pentecost.

## "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us"

We celebrate Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and presence among us. Jesus comes to show us God's love. He comes to bring us God's peace. We will study God's Word and Jesus, the Word, in the coming year to better understand how Jesus comes to us as messiah and savior.

**Sing or say:** "Crown Him with Many Crowns" (*LBW* 170).

## Bible Study Sessions Overview

**Session 1** (January 1996 Lutheran Woman Today): "The Beloved Son" (Mark 1:4-11) considers why Jesus was baptized with sinners and how baptism is a sign of grace today. (**Session for Epiphany.**)

**Session 2** (February): "The Tempted Son" (Luke 4:1-13) looks at Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and calls us to turn to Jesus for compassion and strength in trial.

**Session 3** (March): "The Crucified Messiah" (Mark 14:61-65; 15:1-40) focuses on Jesus' crucifixion as "King of the Jews," an event that means death and life for us today. (**Session for Lent.**)



**Session 4** (April): "The Risen Christ" (John 20:1-18) discusses Jesus' resurrection, which ultimately means life, not death, for us. (Session for Easter.)

**Session 5** (May): "The Advocate and Intercessor" (Hebrews 7:23-28; Romans 8:31-39) deals with Jesus' ongoing advocacy for us and the power of prayer in his name. (Session for Pentecost.)

**Session 6** (June): "The Healer" (Mark 5:21-43; 7:24-30) examines three of Jesus' healing miracles.

**Sessions 7 and 8** (July/August): "The Servant" (Luke 10:38-42; 22:24-27) considers how Jesus' call to serve God stands against our human understanding of power, and also calls us to affirm our gifts. "The Friend of Sinners" (Luke 15:1-32) explores Jesus' intimacy with the most unlikely people, including us.

**Session 9** (September): "The Teacher" (Matthew 5:17-20; 22:34-40) shows that Jesus did not destroy the law, but fulfilled it by loving God and the neighbor and teaching his disciples to do the same.

**Session 10** (October): "The Rebel" (Luke 5:17—6:11) highlights Jesus as a troublemaker who wanted people to realize that God's love cannot be confined by boundaries or human traditions.

**Session 11** (November): "The Righteous Judge" (Matthew 25:31-46; 26:26-29) gives a preview of how Jesus will judge people at the end of history.

**Session 12** (December): "The Babe in Bethlehem" (Luke 2:1-20) concludes the study with a look at Jesus' birth as the long-awaited Messiah. (Advent/Christmas session.)

## Lutheran Woman Today

The Bible study, "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us," is carried in the 199 issues of *Lutheran Woman Today*. See page 49 for subscription information. In each issue of LWT you also will find articles and stories to expand and enrich the Bible study topic.

## Companion Pieces Available

Resources are available to enrich the Bible study in LWT, including:

- *Bible Study Resource Book and Audiocassette*, which contain insights and information to help you dig deeper. The audiocassette offers 12 devotional reflections to help you prepare for each session. Code: LT2-9625, \$5.50.
- *Combined Leader Guide and Resource Book*, which explores each question and offers group-process helps to assist a Bible study group leader. It also comes with the audiocassette. Code: LT2-9626, \$8.95.
- *Informational Video*, which features study writer Carolyn Keller, an excellent introduction to the study. Code: LT2-9624, \$9.95.

To order these resources and learn about others related to "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us," call (800) 324-4648, ext. 636.

# Remembering ephthah's Daughter

Gwen Sayler

In the '50s, growing up in Underwood, North Dakota, I was blissfully unaware of violence against women and children. No one talked about it. Black eyes and bruises were ignored, or dismissed as signs of clumsiness. It seemed there was no violence against women and children in my small rural community.

Today, of course, we know better. Violence has been and continues to be a reality in the lives of many women and children in every community. We know better now—and yet, how hard it is still to name violence as a reality in our lives and the lives of those we love. Where can we turn to gain strength to name and claim the violence we or those we love have suffered? Where can we go to get resources to help us take a stand against violence in our lives and world?

We can turn to the Bible, especially to its often ignored stories of our foremothers. A number of biblical women were victims of violence. Dinah (Genesis 34), Tamar (2 Samuel 13), the Levite's concubine (Judges 19), and probably Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), were raped. After giving his concubine to the men of the city so they could gang-rape her, the Levite cut her body into twelve pieces and sent them throughout Israel as a call to war (Judges 19). Lot encouraged the men of Sodom to rape his virgin daughters rather than his male guests (Genesis 19). Victorious Israelite warriors sometimes were told to capture virgins from the enemy and use them as they saw fit (see Numbers 31, Judges 21). The list goes on and on. What can we learn from these stories in Scripture? How can they help our struggles against violence?

The power of a story lies in our ability to enter it. Stories cause us to laugh and cry, to see ourselves and our world in a different

way. The biblical stories of violence against women are so times called “texts of terror.” They have power to make us and make us angry. They empower those of us who have been victims of violence to name and claim our pain so that we move toward healing. They inspire those of us who have not personally experienced violence to see our world in a different way and to get involved in the struggle against violence in our society.

Biblical women are our sisters, our foremothers. We tell their stories to remember them—and to gain resources from their struggles for our lives in this often violent world. This story with particular power for us as we reflect on violence against women, that of Jephthah’s daughter, recorded in Judges 11.

The story is set before the time of the monarchy, in the period when local leaders arose in times of crisis to lead the various tribes of Israel. Jephthah, an outcast outlaw, is called home to lead the people of Gilead against hostile Ammonites (vs. 1-3). Prior to what will be the decisive battle, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Jephthah, a sure sign of impending victory (vs. 6). Apparently, Jephthah doesn’t trust the sign. He “hedges

his bets” by making a vow to God: “If God will grant him victory, he will sacrifice (as a burnt offering) ‘whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me’ after my battle” (vs. 30-31).

The battle is won. Jephthah is victorious (vs. 33). When he returns home, his only child—a daughter whose name is not given

—rushes out of the door to give him a hero’s welcome with music, flourishes and dancing (vs. 34). Jephthah, realizing immediately the implications of his vow, blames his daughter for what she feels compelled to do: “You have brought me very low; you have become the cause of great trouble to me” (vs. 35).

Jephthah’s daughter does not contest her sentence. She will be sacrificed for the sake of her father’s vow. This, she knows, is a given. But she doesn’t simply go quietly into the night. She uses the power she does have to ask for a two-month reprieve so that she and her women friends can go to the mountains to “bewail my virginity” (vs. 36-37). We can imagine Jephthah’s daughter and her friends in the mountains crying and laughing, reminiscing and protesting the unfairness of her impending death. When the two months have passed, Jephthah

**Where** can we  
turn to **gain strength** to  
name and claim the violence we  
or those we love have suffered?



ter returns home. In fulfillment of his vow, her father sac-  
s her as a whole burnt offering (vs. 38-39).

ephthah's daughter dies...but her story lives on. For hun-  
s of years the daughters of Israel have gone out for four  
each year to lament and remember her (vs. 39-40). Her  
lives on through the women who refuse to forget or deny,  
ake time together to remember her and in so doing gain  
gth and support for their lives.

Women of the ELCA, we are descendants of Jephthah's  
hter. Unnamed in our story, Jephthah's daughter is named  
r hearts as we remember and claim her "text of terror."

ht in games of power and  
ol that men around her  
with each other and with  
she names for us the sys-  
of violence in which so  
y of our sisters—and we  
elves—sometimes are  
ped. Rebuked by her  
r, she bears strong wit-  
to the injustice of blam-  
ictims for their victimiza-

Those of us who have been victims of violence are her and  
s us.

Women of the ELCA, we are sisters of the women who  
year go to the mountains to remember Jephthah's daugh-  
They are models for us in our stand against violence. We  
not always be able to stop the violence, but we can witness  
ast it. We can remember and tell and support one another.  
an work together so that individuals can be healed and our  
ty can become a healthier place. Together, we are the  
en who refuse to forget.

Biblical stories are a valuable resource in our efforts to  
rstand and take a stand against violence. Entering the sto-  
changes us. We remember, see, live differently. Together we  
rience healing from the violence inflicted upon us.  
ther we can work proactively to end cycles of vio-  
in our world. The stories of our biblical foremoth-  
oint us on our way. **GCA**

*Arwen Sayler is a Lutheran pastor and associate  
ssor in Old Testament at Wartburg Theological  
nary in Dubuque, Iowa. She is a member of the  
eran Deaconess class of '71.*



*Some practical advice.*

# The Big

# IF

Linda Johnson Seyenkulo

**a**pproximately 95% of the victims of domestic violence are women. ...In the United States, a woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a male partner than by another assailant. ...An estimated three to four million American women are battered each year by their husbands or partners.

Many different kinds of women are battered by their husbands or partners. Abuse cuts across class, race, education, and income levels. We know that family violence goes in cycles. And we know the violence will not stop unless the cycle is broken. If you are in an abusive relationship, or know or love someone in an abusive relationship, there are practical things to do to help break the cycle. Read on.

## **IF YOU ARE BEING ABUSED AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO**

Know that you are not the only one being abused. Abuse is a silent crime, but there are resources to help you. Contact your pastor—if he or she is a trustworthy person with this issue. Look in the phone book under “domestic violence” or “abuse” for a phone number, or call your local social service agency for a phone number.

Remember that it is not your duty to keep the marriage relationship together at all cost. Safety comes first. You can end the relationship from a distance.

Keep a list of resources for yourself: places to go, people to call, local shelters.

Get help and support from people around you. Choose people carefully.

Don't let yourself be isolated. Have frequent contact with people. Friends and family can be very helpful. If they are not, get in contact with a social service agency or church and ask for help in finding support.

Do things to strengthen yourself. Eat right and exercise for physical strength; pray and read the Bible, seek out church fellowship groups for spiritual strength.

Remember that violence is not a private family matter. Remember that you do not cause, nor are you responsible for, the violence directed toward you. Remember that there are no excuses or reasons to justify abuse.

## **IF YOU ARE THINKING OF LEAVING AN ABUSIVE SITUATION**

Be sure you have everything you need together, so that you are ready to leave quickly, if necessary. Gather together copies of identification, birth certificates for you and your children, money (for home, car, safety deposit box), bank books, any charge cards, medicines, children's items (bottles, diapers, clothes, favorite toys, blankets).

Begin to save money. It is a good idea to open an account in your own name, if possible. Otherwise, find a safe place where you can hide money saved from food or other budgets. Make an extra set of car keys and hide them in a hiding place so that you can leave easily.

Make sure you and your children are safe. Do not leave your children unless absolutely necessary. If you must go very quickly. This is very important for future custody disputes. If you leave them, go back and get them as soon as possible. Take the police with you if needed.

**If you are in an abusive relationship, or know or love someone in an abusive relationship, there are practical things to do to help break the cycle.**

## **IF YOU HAVE DECIDED TO LEAVE AN ABUSIVE SITUATION**

Get outside help. Find a counselor who does not blame you for the abuse and who puts your safety first.

Watch for changes in your situation. Keep assessing your safety level.

Plan what to do and where to go if you are in danger. This should involve transportation (always keep gas in the car and a set of keys), enough money for one day, a list of phone numbers of helping places and people, and a plan of where to go.



Work out a code word with someone you trust so you can phone them if you are in danger. Having such a word means you don't have to explain what's happening—and gets you out quickly.

Be good to yourself. Find some things you like to do—walking, gardening, Bible study—and if you can do these things with friends (to avoid isolation), it's even better.

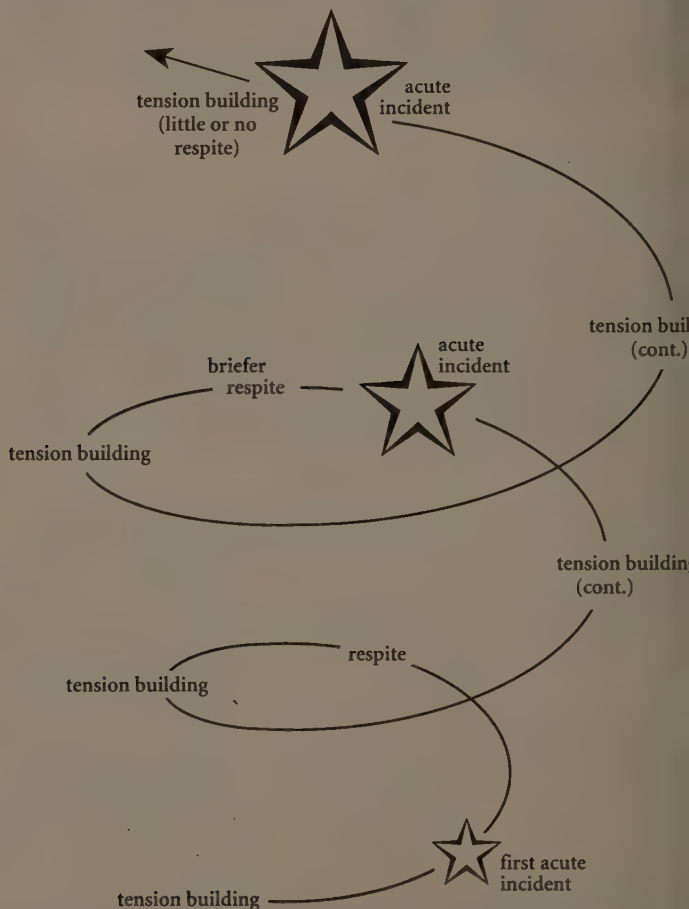


Diagram A: Cycle of Violence from *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response*, copyright © 1995 Augsburg Fortress.

Take care of yourself physically. That will affect the way you feel and your ability to cope with stress. Stay away from alcohol, drugs, and pills. If you start to have suicidal thoughts, seek professional help.

If you have children, do make sure they are safe in the situation. If not, get them out. Make sure that your children

and you that violence is not okay.

Tell someone you trust about your situation. Ask her to regularly check in with you.

## **YOU SUSPECT THAT SOMEONE'S SITUATION IS ABUSIVE**

Introduce a friend to the person being abused. Engage her in activities that help avoid isolation. In subtle ways, let her know you could be a source of support.

Learn about family violence, and recognize the cycle of abuse: tension and verbal abuse; then an acute battering incident; then calmness and apologetic, loving behavior. (See diagram A.)

If you hear a violent situation taking place near your home, call the police and report what you hear or see while it is happening. You may save someone's life.

Finally, if you are a professional working with the family or a member of the family, you have a legal responsibility to report to child-protection services that you suspect a child is being abused.

## **SOMEONE TELLS YOU A STORY OF ABUSE**

First of all, listen. Don't react with horror, or intense emotion. The story she tells is probably not the worst she could tell. Thank her for sharing and assure her she can trust you.

Ask her, "Do you feel safe?" or "Do you think you are in immediate danger?" Offer to help find resource places and people.

Don't take on the role of a counselor or expert. Don't try to fix the situation or force a decision. Do keep listening, encouraging, supporting.

## **YOU ARE IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU REALIZE YOU ARE THE ABUSER**

Remember that violence is a choice—your choice. It is time to stop blaming your partner, drugs, alcohol, job stress, or anything else for the violence.

Know that the adage "Once a batterer, always a batterer" is true. You can change, even if you were battered as a child and battering is a pattern for you. It will not be easy to change—but possible.

Look for help in finding other ways to express your needs, feelings, and desires in relationships.

The first step is acknowledging your responsibility for the violence. The next step is to seek help. When you decide to seek help, contact your pastor or a counselor. Find someone who will take your concerns seriously and has experience working with

batterers. Break the silence about what is going on in your family or relationship. Group therapy has the best success record in changing battering behavior.

God be with you as you look for new ways to live in the relationships you have been given.

## IF YOU WANT YOUR CHURCH TO BE A SAFE PLACE FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Know that many women being battered will seek help from the church. Caring pastors and others in the church can be especially helpful because they may know the whole family, and often have visited in the family home.

For many women abuse is faith-shattering. They will ask questions like: Why is God punishing me or letting this happen to me? What can I do so that I can stop the violence happening to me? Why am I so bad that I bring it on? What does the Bible say about situations like this? What does the church say? Can I ever forgive the batterer? Women need to understand that they are not responsible for the violence. They need to hear the redeeming word: they are worth

**Remember that  
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private family matter.  
Remember that there  
are no excuses or reasons  
to justify abuse.**

while, created in God's image.

Do not be too quick to say "forgive and forget." There are some things to be worked out first.

The following suggestions for pastoral counselors of battered women are drawn from *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment* by Joy Bussert (Lutheran Church in America, 1986).

1. If a person's story sounds like abuse, ask if it is. Ask, "Are you in danger?" or "Does he hit you when he's angry?"
2. Believe her.
3. Listen and affirm feelings.
4. Unequivocally challenge the violence. Violence is never justified.
5. Suggest resources.
6. Promise your continued involvement.
7. Assure confidentiality.
8. Do not suggest marriage counselors. (This will not work unless the batterer has come to terms with his violence and is working to change it.)
9. Give her the gift of time and be prepared for frustration. Healing could be a long process.



Do remember that God's forgiveness and healing love are there for the whole family. Watch your own prejudices in working with such a situation. Keep in mind the basic principles making sure people are safe and violence has stopped. Be knowledgeable about family violence and cycle of abuse in families.

The belief that women stay in battering situations because they like to be hurt is a myth. Women stay out of fear, responsibility, pride, guilt, and shame. Many women stay for economic reasons.

Because of racism, all of this is intensified for women of color. Some men of color find themselves rejected or stereotyped by helping professionals. They also know that men of color are treated more unfairly by the judicial system than white men. That leads to reluctance to tell anyone for fear of what will happen—and it is a justified fear.

Battering is an issue of power, not just violence. For further discussion on this, see "Wheel of Fear, Wheel of Love," p. 39.

**C**ongregations can be safe, healing places. They can offer educational programs on family violence. They can post resources for victims of family violence. A good place to post resources is inside the women's restroom, where a woman could copy phone numbers for help unobserved by others.

The pastor of such a congregation is not afraid to name family violence as evidence of broken relationships and sin. These congregations offer fellowship experiences, Bible study, and crisis situations that lift up women and give them strength.

These congregations model the love that Jesus teaches us and challenge the overwhelming violence of our society and culture. The good news that Jesus Christ came bringing forgiveness of sins and the healing of broken relationships is preached. This is life-changing theology for people who live in violent families. **CGA**

*Rev. Linda Johnson Seyenkulo serves at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Franklin Park, Illinois. She is indebted to the National Woman Abuse Prevention Project for some of the facts and suggestions in this piece.*

**The National Coalition  
Against Domestic Violence  
will send out information  
and offer local referrals.  
Contact either office:**

NCADV  
P.O. Box 34103  
Washington, D.C. 20043-4103  
(202) 638-6388

NCADV  
P.O. Box 18749  
Denver, CO 80218-0749  
(303) 839-1852



# Are You Hearing Bells or Alarms?

Karen Titus

**You know this is the man for you. You've fallen head over heels in love with him and can practically hear the wedding bells ringing. He seems to be perfect, a regular Prince Charming.**

Oh, occasionally he hurts your feelings, makes jokes at your expense, and embarrasses you in front of your family and friends. But that doesn't happen too often. In fact, he really doesn't want you spending too much time with them—he says he wants you all to himself.

Watch out. Those bells you're hearing may be sounding an alarm.

This could be the start of an abusive relationship, not a marriage made in heaven. And according to experts, it is possible to spot the warning signs that could spell trouble for your relationship down the road. The key is not to be blinded by love.

"I think women often don't see an abusive relationship coming because they don't want to see it coming," says Madeline Rich, director of Women's Services for the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago. "Often a woman starts getting involved in a relationship and then doesn't want to see what isn't right about it, even though it might be apparent to others. If a woman becomes more honest with herself about her feelings, she might see that the relationship is unbalanced." And when one partner has more power than the other, says Rich, "the cycle of abuse can escalate."

Some of the warning signs to watch for include:

■ Possessiveness. He may "love you so much" that he doesn't want you spending time with anyone else, including family, friends, your church group, or others. He may require that you ask permission before doing even the most common of tasks, such as going to the store, making a phone call, or attending church.

■ Any kind of physical abuse, such as pushing, shoving, or slapping. He may threaten to hurt you or your friends or family.

■ Problems with alcohol or drug abuse. He may insist he's merely a social drinker or recreational user of drugs, or he may demand that you join him in abusing these substances.

■ Emotional and verbal abuse, including put-downs, criticism and threats. He may question your competence, belittle your efforts or appearance, or mock your aspirations.

■ You may feel the need to be "perfect," in everything from the way you look to the way you prepare meals. "A woman who is involved with a batterer never knows which behavior he will exhibit and finds herself walking on eggs to keep him calm and protect herself," writes Jan Berliner Statman, author of *The Battered Woman's Survival Guide*.

■ Jealousy. He may be suspicious of how you spend your time or may accuse you of having affairs. He may be jealous of your friends, both male and female, or he may confront your male friends or co-workers and accuse them of having an affair with you.

■ Feelings of isolation. You may feel that you can't talk to anyone else about your relationship or aspects of it that are bothering you. As you become more isolated from family and friends, the stage becomes set for even more abuse.

■ Being pressured to have sex.

According to Rich, some of these signs may be subtle early in the relationship. "He may put you down, then say to you, 'You can't take a joke,' or 'You're too sensitive,'" she warns. "But those kinds of things are all signs of disrespect."

Intuition can be a good guide. "We tell women they need to pay attention to their gut feelings about the relationship," Rich says.

**A**ccording to Statman, a batterer usually is manipulative, exhibiting a "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" type of personality. He may be charming and thoughtful one moment, angry and violent the next. He may fly into a rage for no reason and later blame you for his outburst.

But, she adds, forewarned is forearmed. Knowing some of the signs of a potentially abusive relationship may keep you from getting involved even deeper, before it's too late to turn back.

Writes Statman: "It would be wise...to remember that if a man seems too good to be true, he probably is." **GA**

*Karen Titus, Chicago, Illinois, is a freelance writer. She is former managing editor of North Shore Magazine.*

**There were lots of smiles and hugs as the women gathered in the familiar therapy room.** They came for a six-month check-in after completing weeks of therapy together. They had come a long way on their journeys from victim to survivor. It was good to see another again.

They began their time together with prayer, expressing thankfulness for God's continued presence in their lives

# Stories of Survivors

Jane P. Mitcham

for one another. The therapist then suggested she read to them from her notes of their session together. "Notes," she said, "reflect the stories they shared that day." They nodded and she began.

At that time, **Jill** was still in a marriage where abuse was a common event. Regardless of how hard she tried, she never got the meals right or

the house clean enough. She never knew what to do with her children. One time her husband wanted them asleep when he came home, the next time he wanted them awake waiting for him. The verbal and emotional abuse had started almost immediately in their marriage. The physical violence came later. At first it was infrequent and Jill believed she could figure out how to make it stop. However, one night his violence was so severe that she was taken to the hospital and encouraged to go to the women's shelter. From there she was referred to this group for therapy.

**Anita's** story was quite different. She was the victim of childhood incest. First, it had been her father. He came into her room at night. He began by fondling her, but when she reached the age of 10, he began forcing her to have sexual intercourse with him. Her older brother also began sexually abusing her. One time he brought home his friends from school and they gang-raped her. She never told anyone about this until she came to this group.

**Josephine** had not been sure she belonged in the group. She had grown up in a loving home and she had a good marriage. Her abuse had come from her pastor. When



father died, she had gone to her pastor for counseling. He told her he could comfort her in a special way because he was a man of God. He used Scripture and prayer to convince her that God was guiding their relationship. His hugs changed quickly to sexual touches, then to intercourse. She was so ashamed of herself, the pastor threatened to tell her husband—if she stopped coming to counseling—that *she* had made the sexual advances to him. It wasn't until she received a call from someone else that she learned that she was one of five women in the congregation who were being sexually abused by this pastor.

**Ethel's** husband never hit her. She had never been afraid of him. It was his demeaning words; he belittled her to the brink of suicide. She began to believe she was worthless, no good, trash, an embarrassment to him and the whole family. After a suicide attempt, her psychiatrist recommended her for the group.

During the session, the four women learned to define a *victim* as *someone who has experienced a traumatic event in which she has been in abusive power over her.* Sometimes it is a one-time experience. Sometimes it is a way of life. A victim is someone whose control of life has been taken away from her by the abuser, whose waking moments are filled with the memory of the trauma and with a crippling sense of powerlessness. She cannot get her thoughts away from the past. She believes she is worthless.

"I must admit," said the rapist, "that for the most part you looked and acted like victims that first session." They all nodded their heads in agreement. "But look at you now," she said. "You appear to be quite a different group of women."

**T**hat statement initiated a good bit of conversation among the four women. They talked about what it means to be a survivor. *Survivors are persons who live with the abuse they've experienced.* The memory of the abuse never really goes away. But a survivor is in control of the abuse. The abuse no longer controls one's life. "It's more like 'forgive and remember' than 'forgive and forget,'" said Josephine. "I want to remember so I never get in that kind of situation again."

*Survivors also are persons who have regained a sense of self.*



*They know who they are—warts and all—and they feel good about themselves.* Jill added, “You know, I always thought I had to be perfect before I could call myself a survivor. The harder I tried to be perfect, the more depressed I became.” They all nodded. Survivors, they agreed, can accept their humanness and still feel good about themselves.

“I’d add one more thing,” said Anita. “I believe survivors live in the present, not the past.” “For sure,” added Ethel, “but I’d add a step further. I believe *survivors can see a future that is challenging and inviting!*”

Each member shared where she believed she was on the continuum from victim to survivor. All agreed that they saw themselves as survivors, although all realized that there are days when the victim mentality sneaks back in. After talking a little about that, they concluded that all people—victims and not—have good days and bad days.

Their discussion about the role of religion was interesting. Jill expressed an appreciation for the therapist’s openness about her own faith and for the use of prayer and meditation time during their sessions. “My faith in God is what has kept me going all these years,” she said. Then Josephine spoke. “I need to say that I almost didn’t come back after our first session. The abuse I received from my pastor almost destroyed my faith.” Josephine went on to say that going to worship and communion was still hard for her.

**M**any other types of help were mentioned. Good friends with listening ears, support groups, family members who walked the journey day by day, people who encouraged playfulness, new tasks and responsibilities in life, a book or a movie, a phone call from someone who cared. And their list went on and on! Lots of external help, for sure, leads one from victim to survivor.

“But most of all,” the therapist concluded, “there is that inner strength that comes from God. We are created in God’s image and are wonderfully made!”

“Loving God,” she prayed, “we know that you hold us in the palm of your hand, that we are yours, and that nothing can take that away from us. Keep us growing, keep us healing. Keep us safe. Amen.” C



*Dr. Jane P. Mitcham, Salisbury, North Carolina, is assistant to the bishop for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s North Carolina Synod. While the stories above are real, fictitious first names have been used to ensure anonymity.*

# Wheel of Fear, Wheel of Love

Pamela Cooper-White

When the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
... Happy are those who live in  
your house, ever singing your  
praise (Psalm 84:3-4).

**H**ow happy are our homes? When we think of what God's house might be like, or what God wants our houses to be, are they havens of peace and fairness? For many of us—including some church-goers—the answer is no. There is physical violence in more than one-fourth of our homes. Many of our homes are filled with criticism, distrust, and verbal abuse. In all abusive family situations, fear is the main emotion, whether—to outsiders—the family appears chaotic and out of control, or super-perfect.

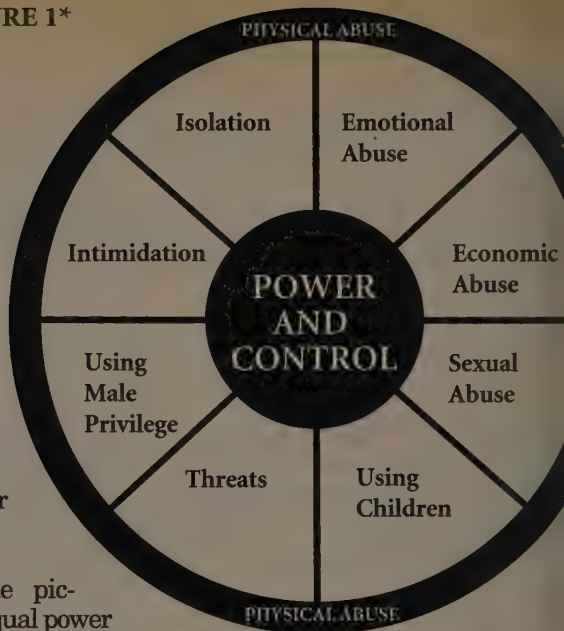
Domestic violence, or battering, is not simply a matter of poor communication skills, or temper, or venting frustration. Battering is much more accurately understood as behavior that intimidates and controls the abused partner, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining authority.

One way to illustrate and understand the dynamics of abuse is called "Power and Control Wheel" (see

Figure 1, p. 40). Power and control are at the center of the wheel, because they are the underlying motives for all abuse. Physical and sexual violence are on the rim of the wheel, because violence (whether frequent or episodic) serves to establish and then maintain the control. Between the core of the wheel and the rim are eight wedges representing the variety of coercive and abusive behaviors that may be present in an abusive relationship. Notice that not all the behaviors rely upon direct physical force. Emotional and verbal abuse, threats, limiting the spouse's whereabouts or friendships, the dominating of family finances or major decisions, insisting upon having the final say, controlling the family's activities both inside and outside the house—all these behaviors weave together in a pattern of dominance that destroys relationships. Many women, even those who have experienced quite extreme physical violence, have reported that it was the psychological abuse, manipulation, blaming, and control that caused them the most lasting pain.

Battered women enter committed love relationships as we all do, with a sense of hope, vitality, and care for the other. After a season or a lifetime of abuse, women often feel not only phys-

FIGURE 1\*



ically battered, but emotionally beaten down, confused, and immobilized by despair and self-blame.

Contrast the picture of unequal power and unfair domination presented in the Power and Control Wheel with Figure 2, the "Equality Wheel," p. 41. Notice that now equality is at the core of the relationship. Surrounding all the other behaviors of the partners toward each other is a commitment to nonviolence. Control is replaced by negotiation, fairness, and respect. In a nonviolent relationship, there is a mutual commitment to safety, responsibility, honesty, and reciprocity.

In this second wheel, the assumption is not that a healthy relationship is conflict-free. On the contrary, healthy relationships will always include some honest disagreement. However, there are an acceptance of difference and a willingness to enter into negotiation to settle disagreements in ways that build trust and support, rather than reinforce the control of one person over the other. Compromise and flexibility character-

ize this kind of egalitarian relationship, rather than the rigidity and control that characterize abuse.

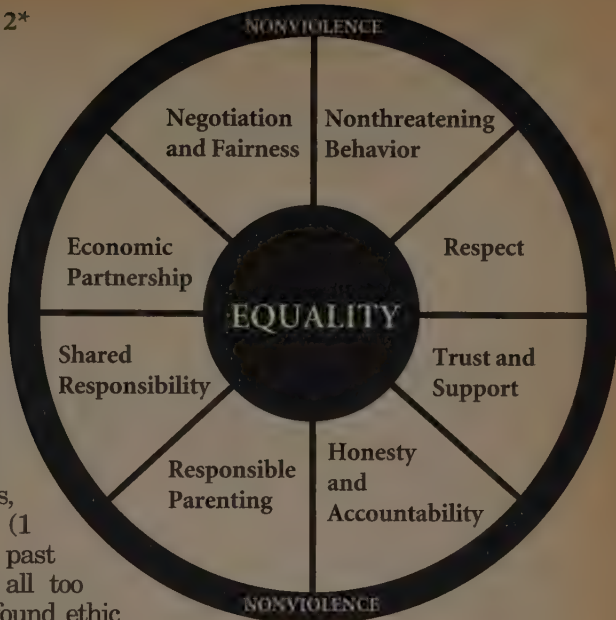
Catholic theologian and teacher Henri Nouwen writes about the "house of fear" and the "house of love" as ways of imaging the traps humans fall into, and about the liberating love of God that frees us. The Power and Control Wheel is a photographic depiction of the "house of fear." Love is gradually snuffed out by a continuing atmosphere of control and threat. To live in the "house of love" requires that all the members of the house be committed to loving one another as God loves, in a spirit of generosity, compassion, and justice.

Most of us are familiar with Paul's apt description of love: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not jealous or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not reject

\* Used by permission of Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 206 West 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812.



FIGURE 2\*



wrongdoing, but  
es in the truth. It  
all things, believes  
ings, hopes all things,  
res all things" (1  
thians 13:4-7). In past  
ations, the church all too  
demanded this profound ethic  
the woman in a relationship—  
cularly the bearing and the  
ing—and condoned the violence  
reverence of the man.

**T**hankfully, this is chang-  
ing. We now understand  
that relationships must  
be mutual in order to give  
each partner the chance  
ow into the full potential God  
ds—the "full stature of Christ."  
Ephesians 5:22, the passage that  
ften been used to exhort women  
nd obedience ("Wives, be subject  
ur husbands as you are to the  
, has been misunderstood. The  
h has forgotten that its original  
age was one of liberation and  
ity. Written almost 2000 years  
n a time and culture where the  
rule over his household was law,  
assage begins with a statement  
f subjugation, but of mutuality:  
subject to *one another* out of rever-  
for Christ" (verse 21). Husbands  
xhorted to "love their wives as

they do their own bodies" (verse 28)!

The "Power and Control Wheel" and the "Equality Wheel" are powerful tools. With them, we can begin to understand violence in the family more deeply for what it is—a dynamic of bullying, domination, and control. We can uphold biblical models of relationships that further God's realm of justice, mutuality, caring, and peace. ☪

*The Rev. Pamela Cooper-White is the author of The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's*



*Response. She is priest-associate at St. Mary's Episcopal, Park Ridge, Illinois, and adjunct professor at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.*

# Bread of Tears

Sandra Tjepkema Mintner

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry  
with your people's prayers? You have fed them  
with the bread of tears (Psalm 80:4-5).

**H**omemade bread was on the table. It had been taken from the freezer and added to the buffet table, set by

kind friends for the mourners and family. My husband reached for the last piece and asked softly, "Did you have some of this?" and I said, "Yes, honey. Please take it." He bit into the crust. The expression on his face at the moment will be with me forever. Since then, I have often thought of it at Communion.

The bread was made by his mother, shot to death two days before in an armed robbery. It occurred as she took an early morning walk with a friend in a public park. Six shots were fired at close range, all within three feet. In a moment, she was taken from us and from her grandchildren.

The details of Ann's murder are, to us, excruciating. Six shots fired at that range rip apart the human body. There were entry wounds and exit wounds for every bullet. The ten-inch pools of blood on the grass,

marked by the police with p rulers, led to her broken eyeglasses left behind, all videotaped by police technicians for courtroom

dence.

There are all kinds of suffering in this world, but murder is different. Murder comes from the will of a destructive human being; as such, it seems so preventable. It is not comparable to impersonal evils that exist beyond human control, like disease and natural catastrophe. The murderer has contempt for the God who creates. The young man who murdered my mother-in-law had been counseled and treated under the newer theories of enlightened juvenile justice since his early teens. After putting a gun to someone's head to steal a car, he was arrested, convicted, and released back to the community under a new program of supervision. Within six months he had murdered an elderly woman, his friend's grandmother—before killing my mother-in-law.

It's not an easy thing to do, but I believe that execution is, s

ary to ensure that, taken case  
e, the community will be safe  
a person who has committed  
le or sadistic murders. I wish  
advocates for death-row in-  
would see what the victims'  
es see in the courtroom, talk to  
know their feelings.  
murder destroys communities.  
es a long-lasting mark of fear  
asecurity on the victim's circle  
ily and friends. Many of Ann's  
s now plan to move from their  
s to living arrangements that  
ess independent and more  
e. Our own lives are full of new  
utions. The brave words of  
27 ("Of whom shall I be

afraid?") have a strange ring for me.  
For several years now, my husband  
and I have been more drawn to Good  
Friday than Easter.

In time, we must say good-bye to  
everyone we love in this life. The  
company of our loved ones is fleeting.  
In all of this, I have to say that I do  
appreciate God's daily blessings  
more keenly. There is so much in  
everyday living to give us both plea-  
sure and joy that we simply have to  
give sorrow a rest. **AC**

*Sandra Tjepkema Mintner, a mem-  
ber of St. Matthew Lutheran in  
Beaverton, Oregon, is a wife and  
mother of a four-year-old.*

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*ing violence in rural areas.*

# Grief into Action

Mary Latimer Streufert

**In** June of 1991 our oldest daughter, Carin, had moved home for the summer after her first year of college at the University of Minnesota. Our younger daughter, Emily, had just completed her sophomore year in high school. June 14 was a Friday, the first really nice summer day that year. After an enjoyable evening meal, Carin and her friend Becky left to be with other friends home from college. Don and I decided to go out to the lake. We took the canoe out and paddled down the shore to where Carin and her friends were water-skiing and swimming. We laughed as we listened to their giggles, waved and greeted



**Carin Streufert, May 1991**

her, then paddled back. That was the last time we ever saw our daughter.

After a late-night snack at our favorite restaurant, Carin began her one-mile walk home. Half-way home she was abducted at gunpoint, taken 30 miles from town, raped and taken to death by two men. For five terrifying days we had no clues as to what had happened to our daughter.

During this time we were overwhelmed by fear and uplifted by the supportive response of the community. Twenty minutes after we determined that she was not with her friends, people began to organize search parties, gather food, and distribute tribute flyers. The response was amazing. I believe that this outpouring from the whole community contributed to the two men who killed

Carin coming forward with information on what had happened to her.

For the first months after her death we were in shock. Work was impossible. The community wrapped us gently in a cocoon of their love and caring. Everyone in the community was stunned. Murder is rare in our little town. No one could believe this sort of thing could happen here. But it did.

Following Carin's death, the community mobilized to speak out against violence. In September, before the men were even tried for the crime, the community organized a weekend of events—Responsive Action for Peace (RAP). Out of these efforts evolved a study group that looked at the causes and responses to violence, and at forming a non-violence resource center.

In the fall of 1991 the Blandin Foundation (a local, private foundation) began to explore how its resources could be used to address violence in rural communities. Don and I began working with the foundation's program called Pathways to Peace and Safety. This gave us opportunity to learn more about what was being done in our area, around the state and across the country to address issues of rural violence.

The program brought together people who were working on different aspects of the problem to consider ways to recognize and respond to violence. Two groups grew out of this process: the Community Peace Initiative and the Working Together Project. Both provide a setting where individuals and organizations from different segments



community can join forces to focus on the causes and consequences of violence that often seem so overwhelming.

In January 1995 the Blandin Foundation funded the Citizens Council Center for Reducing Rural Violence. This center, which is directed by Don, will strengthen rural communities through collaborative community approaches to preventing violence. Help is given to communities to gather the people who have power to change their systems, so that they can identify what specific issues of violence they want to address, and then make a plan to carry out the project.

Why look at violence in rural communities? Violent rural crime is on the rise. From 1965 to 1992, the rape, robbery, and assault rates *tripled* in rural communities, according to the United States Department of Justice statistics. The Center for Reducing Rural Violence was created because it became apparent that:

Violence cannot be reduced if an individual, agency, system, or community works alone, and

Violence in rural communities is easily denied, avoided, or overshadowed by urban crime.

**These** past four years have not been easy. There are many times when our grief overcomes us. We have also reacted very differently. I would often find our newfound peace so overwhelming. It kept reminding me that the only reason I was meeting these people was because our daughter was murdered. My spirits would slump and I was done for the day. Don, on the other hand, seemed to be energized by the new opportunities and contacts. He seemed to have an unlimited capacity for new information. Presently, we both seem to have bounced back out. I have more energy and Don isn't quite as driven. Don and I are not alone in our efforts. There are many people who have long been involved and continue to work as advocates for peace and nonviolence. There are also many people who have put their grief into action right alongside us. We all acknowledge that the problem is too big for any one of us to solve alone. We each do our part in whatever way fits our lives. Peace is not just a cause, it is a way of life. **CA**

For more information about the Citizens Council Center for Reducing Rural Violence, write: CCCRRV, 100 NW First Avenue, Grand Rapids, MN 55744.

*Carol Latimer Streufert is a wife, mother, writer, walker, sailor, skier, crusader for peace and nonviolence.*



*What can the women's organization do?*

# Violence Against Women

**V**iolence against women is a major problem in our society. The United States has a rape rate 13 times higher than Great Britain's and 20 times higher than Japan's. According to the United States Senate Judiciary Committee, three out of four women in the United States will be victims of at least one violent crime in their lives.

Statistics about domestic abuse and domestic violence are equally bleak. Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten or abused by someone she loves. Almost half of all women murdered each year are killed by their husbands or lovers. According to the Senate Judiciary Committee, if all the women victimized by domestic violence in one year joined hands, the line would extend from New York City to Los Angeles and back again. Certainly men are also victims of domestic abuse, but the very large majority of victims are women.



The abuse of women cuts across all economic, social, ethnic, and religious lines. Abuse does not stop itself; it generally becomes more frequent and brutal over time.

Too often the woman who is a victim of domestic abuse thinks she is the only woman being treated this way. Too often she thinks it is her fault. Too often pastors and priests tell women, "If only you would be more loving, only you would try harder to be more understanding (patient, sensitive, sympathetic...) you would not do this to yourself."

Those who counsel women in this area often assume that it is the victim's behavior that is wrong, that she is responsible for her own suffering. Other women are afraid that the abuse and violence may be contagious, and they turn to the victim seeking help as the one who breaks the peace.

What can we in the church, especially in the women's organization, do? The churchwide organization is working to educate people about violence against women and how to stop such violence. We

## We can help people understand that women are not attacked accidentally but are the intentional victims of violence.

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ing in a variety of ways to end domestic violence against women: through pre-convention workshops at domestic abuse in 1993 and 94, through our work with other Evangelical Lutheran Church in America units on projects like "Ending Hurting Families" (a synod training program scheduled for general assembly next year), and through efforts to change systems and structures that oppress women.

We can also do much in the congregational units. First, we can work to educate people about violence against women. We can help people understand that women are not attacked accidentally but are the intentional victims of violence. When an abuser loses a promotion or business deal, or has a "bad day," he does not punch his supervisor or client. He waits until he comes home and attacks his wife. Violence against women is not the result of temper or bad appointment. It is the result of violence directed against a *specific* target—women.

Second, we can be helpful and understanding to those women who are victims of domestic violence. We can provide information about shelter and other community resources, but preparations women should make to be ready to leave home quickly, should they need to. This information should be available on a confidential basis, in places like women's restrooms.

We need to recognize the connections between violence against

women and poverty and homelessness. Government reports tell us that more than half of the women who are homeless are the victims of domestic violence. Women who suffer the pain of domestic violence, whose livelihood and care for their children are affected by violence, often have no place to turn for help. It does not have to be this way.

Third, we can make the congregational unit a "safe place" for victims to tell their stories. Too often victims of domestic abuse are re-victimized when they try to find help. The congregational unit should be a place where women in pain can find sensitive hearts and a helping community.

Women who are victims of abuse are everywhere. We pray that when they need help, they will find in us sisters in Christ—ready to be understanding and helpful.

For more information about ELCA and Women of the ELCA efforts to stop domestic abuse, contact me at 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. **CA**

*Charlotte E. Fiechter*  
*Executive Director*  
*Women of the ELCA*

**A Women of the ELCA workshop on domestic violence will be held just prior to the Triennial Convention in July in Minneapolis/St. Paul. Watch LWT for further information.**



## Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Solomonson

### ♦ Vacations for children of Chernobyl

Churches in Germany and Scotland offered vacations to children from the Chernobyl region of Belarus, where the world's worst nuclear reactor accident took place in 1986. The Lutheran Church of Hanover offered holidays to 1,400 children between May and September, and 70 children visited Scotland last summer, thanks to the Scottish Baptist Union.

*O Loving God, bless and protect the children of Chernobyl and those affected by disasters elsewhere.*

### ♦ Lutheran Men in Mission addresses male anger and violence issues

In October, representatives from four synods are being trained to conduct a pilot project in three congregations in each of their synods. The project focuses on issues of male anger and domestic violence. It involves Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, and the Lutheran Youth Organization. Plans are to conduct churchwide training in 1996.

*Help men and women to be true partners, O God of all.*

### ♦ Your daily prayer list

What stories have you noticed in the news that have caught your attention and tugged at your heart? Why not pray for the people involved? Rather than feel helpless as you read or hear the daily news, you can help. You might pray for:

- Those in prisons (whether innocent or guilty), those who are part of the legal system at all levels, police and all who protect
- People in countries of Africa, Central America, Eastern Europe and other parts of the world who live amid violence every day.
- Those who don't have abundance for which we give special thanks this month.

### ♦ Women focus on peace

Since 1943 women have celebrated Peace Day, an event that's come to be known as World Community Women of all denominations urged to celebrate November 3 with the theme "Reserving the Fruit of God's Labor," with children as the focus of the service. For information call Church Women United in New York at (212) 870-2364.

*Loving God, enable us to pray for peace every day of the year.*

*Sonia C. Solomonson is a senior editor for The Lutheran.*



# Bulletin board

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## Violence against women

- Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten or abused.
- Abuse of women cuts across all lines—economic, social, ethnic, and religious.
- Violence against women is not the result of temper or disappointment. It is the result of rage directed against a *specific* target— women.

## What can the women's organization do?

- Work to educate people about violence against women.
- Make the congregational unit a “safe place” for victims to tell their story.
- Be a place where women in pain can find sensitive hearts and a helping community.

Charlotte E. Fiechter, pp. 46-47  
Executive Director, Women of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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